

THE PRESS

REPORTING

Taking Sides in Santo Domingo

Covering the war in the Dominican Republic has been a battle in itself. Reporters have found U.S. officials, both military and civilian, closemouthed and uncooperative; when information has been given out, it has often been wrong. When reporters have taken to the streets for their stories, they have been shot at by snipers, have hitched rides with hysterical drivers while bullets whizzed past. They spend much of their time helping the wounded to hospitals.

Aggravated by one thing or another, most of the 160-man press corps has

Los Angeles Timesman Ruben Salazar interviewed a rebel accused by the State Department of being a Communist: "Florentino doesn't look dangerous. He's slight of build and sports a thin mustache. I went away wishing we had done something to win him to our side." Wrote Dan Kurzman of the Washington Post: "Innumerable conversations have strongly indicated overwhelming popular support for the rebel regime and a corresponding anti-American sentiment arising from U.S. antagonism toward that regime."

Wary of Claims. Back in the U.S., many editorialists and columnists sided with the men in the field. Said the New

forces. Rebel strongpoints, particularly in the southeast section of Santo Domingo, are manned by Communists with only token allegiance to Caamaño." And after spending a week in Santo Domingo, Newsday's Marguerite Higgins filed another minority report: "Be wary of all those claims of widespread support for the rebel Constitutionalists or the loyalist junta. This reporter has been impressed by the hazards of trying to diagnose the feelings of a massively illiterate nation. Oddly enough, in this topsy-turvy world, the very deftness with which Dominicans can switch sides may prove to be a strong card that the Americans can play in an effort to bring seemingly irreconcilable factions together."

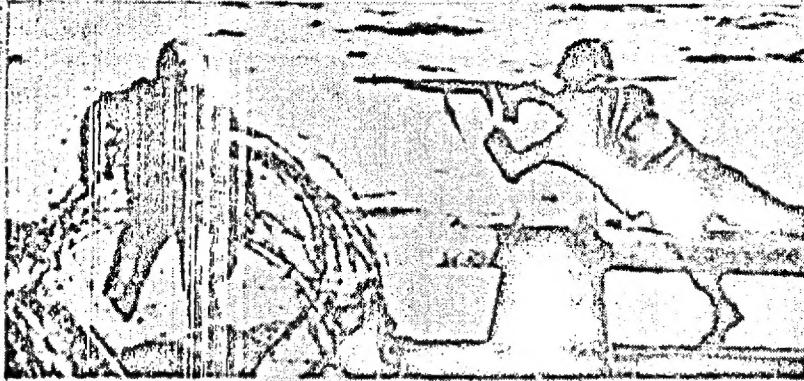
No Child's Play. Through it all, U.S. Government spokesmen were baffled by the antagonism of the press. Some reporters seemed determined to become policymakers. The Trib's Collier complained to U.S. officials that marines were allowed to shoot back when shot at from outside the international zone. "He got quite upset," says one. "He refused to understand that this is not child's play and that our men must protect themselves." Both Collier and Szulc reported last week that U.S. troops were helping the loyalists fight the rebels in northern Santo Domingo, but no other reporters confirmed this story, and many flatly contradicted it. The New York Times ran an Air Force picture purportedly showing U.S. troops aiding the junta last week by arresting rebels. Actually, the photo was taken two weeks ago in the international zone, where rebels were being rounded up for suspected sniping. The Trib ran a similarly slanted photo of a marine firing his rifle, with a caption that upbraided him for defending himself (see cut).

Among the trump cards in the U.S. Government's hand is a devastating report of five OAS ambassadors that backs up U.S. contention that Communists played a substantial part in the revolution. Yet when the report was first issued on May 8, not a single U.S. paper picked it up. Next day Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, held an hour-long press briefing on the report, but even that was given scant play in the press.

Finally, Alaska's Senator Ernest Gruening, one of the most vocal critics of Administration policy in Viet Nam, delivered a furious speech in the Senate: "Unhappily, the U.S. press has been gravely derelict in reporting what has transpired in the OAS with regard to the Dominican crisis. Commentators express doubts regarding the wisdom of expanding our mission to prevent a Communist takeover. Many reports question the extent of Communist infiltration. Yet, to my knowledge, none of the major wire services, newspapers or news agencies have taken the trouble to examine the findings of the OAS investigating team."

Chancellor of the City University. The East Side Congressman blamed part of the people of our city. He said that dealing with the roots of the problem is a slow process. It was Rep. Lindsay's first

Dominican Double Trouble: U. S. Denials, U. S. Deeds



ON THE FENCE in Santo Domingo, an American Marine, under orders to stay neutral, fires at a sniper.

THE OFFICIALS

THE REPORTS

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE COVERAGE
Time to be wary of confident diagnoses.

soured on the U.S. position and flocked to rebel headquarters, where people seemed anxious to make their case to reporters. Predisposed to side with the underdog against a Latin American military junta and against U.S. military intervention, many of the correspondents wrote glowing accounts of their fleeting interviews with the rebels.

Cabled the New York Herald Tribune's Barnard Collier: "The U.S. action was meant to thwart internationally trained Communists who are fighting alongside the leftist rebels. Its effect has been to give the Communist world a rallying cry, to create dozens of Dominican Communist martyrs and to turn an increasing number of rebels against the U.S." Said New York Timesman Tad Szulc: "The U.S. finds itself identified with a military junta that is widely hated, and it may be standing on the threshold of a violent showdown with the highly popular rebel movement."

York Times: "Little awareness has been shown by the U.S. that the Dominican people—not just a handful of Communists—were fighting and dying for social justice and constitutionalism." Even Walter Lippmann, who had supported the U.S. intervention, hoped for the success of what he called the "legitimist party—that of the Constitutionalists." But the fact is that Colonel Francisco Caamaño Deñó, boss of the so-called Constitutionalists, had helped overthrow the constitutional President, Juan Bosch, in 1963. And the Bosch constitution that Caamaño was supposedly supporting forbids any military man—Caamaño, for example—to hold office.

Not all reporters, to be sure, were happy with the rebels. Warned the Herald Tribune's Rowland Evans and Robert Novak: "The U.S. press has taken the rebel command, but they maintain only tenuous control over all their

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